

New York Women's Foundation®

Bronx Borough Brief

August 2013

Women helping women FUNDING CHANGE



Prepared by the New York Women's Foundation's Operations and Strategic Learning Department

Introduction

Overview

This report includes figures specific to the work of grantee organizations located in the Bronx borough of New York City. Grantee partners supported in the Bronx have a range of organizational structures and scopes of practice. Some grantee partners are community-based organizations that promote opportunities and ameliorate challenges in the lives of local neighborhood residents while others have a broader reach. In areas as diverse as training women entrepreneurs to providing academic tutoring for girls, these organizations are making a difference in the lives of women and girls. **Across this continuum, the New York Women's Foundation continues to fund innovators whose work helps to transform individual lives as well as communities and promotes the vision of a more safe, just and equitable society.**

The New York Women's Foundation® was formed in 1987 and made its first grants to community-based organizations in 1988. One of the first grantees funded in 1988 was located in the Bronx. Since those initial four grants were issued, the Foundation has steadily increased its investments in communities throughout New York City. In 2012, NYWF® awarded \$5.25 million to 80 grantee partners across the five boroughs.

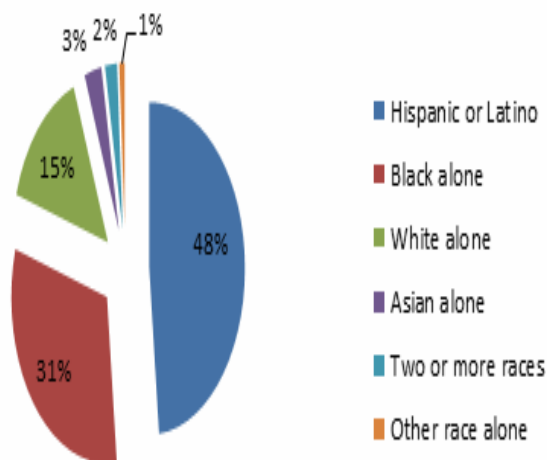
The Purpose of This Report

The Foundation has a strong commitment to serving residents of the Bronx. This profile will provide demographic and descriptive data of the Bronx, give an overview of NYWF's investments in the borough, and offer stories from highlighted grantee partners based on the Bronx. The profile will highlight success stories from the field as well as a discussion of ongoing challenges. While the Bronx faces significant difficulties, NYWF grantee partners are helping women and girls every day to achieve their goals and improve their life circumstances. The New York Women's Foundation funds innovators whose work transforms individual lives as well as communities and promotes the vision of a more safe, just and equitable society.

Highlights of Who Lives in the Bronx?

- The Bronx is the **fourth largest borough** in New York City, adding **240,000 residents** between 1980 and 2012, an increase of 20%. The population now exceeds 1.4 million residents.
- Bronx households are primarily made up of **people of color** with 79% of residents identifying as Latino or Black. Figure 1 provides the breakdown of Bronx residents by race and ethnic groups.

Figure 1. Bronx Residents by Race / Ethnicity



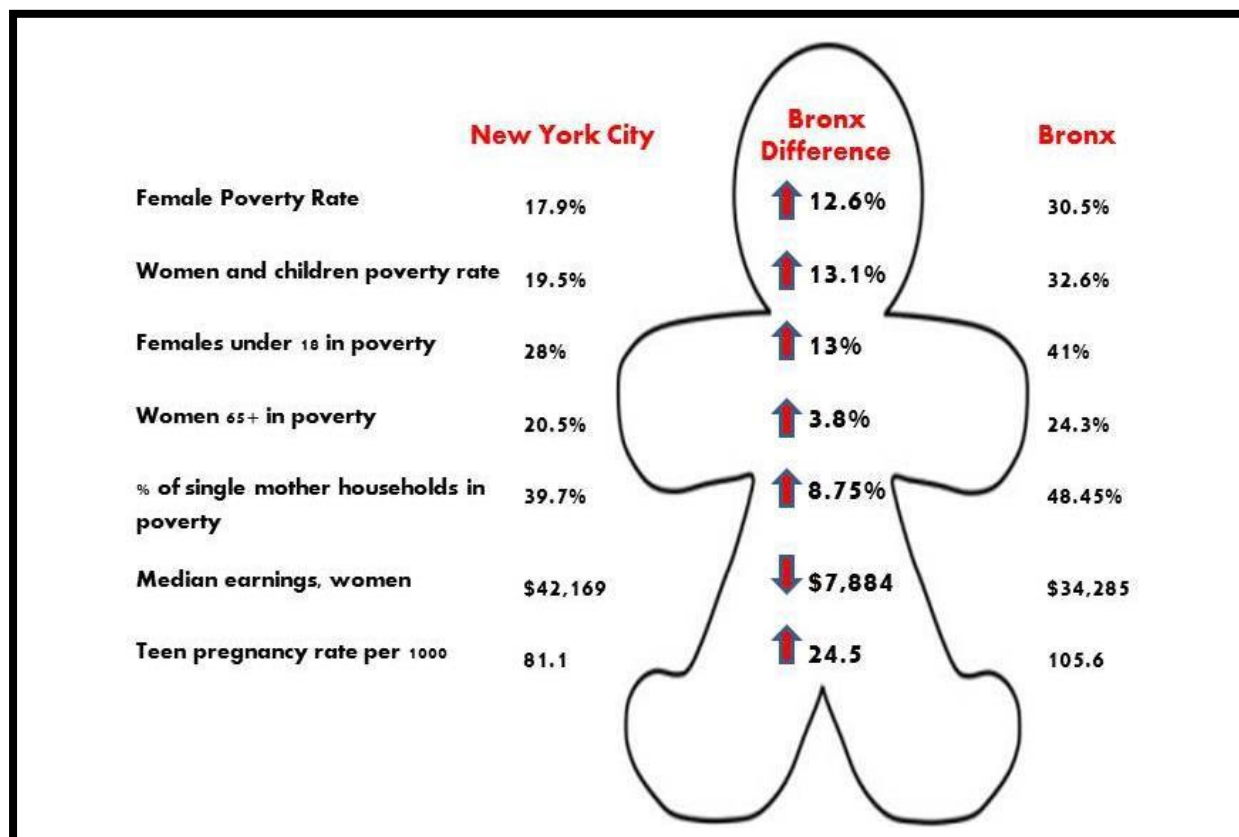
- New York has always been a city of immigrants, and this is evident in the Bronx where **33% of residents were born in other**

The differences between the life resources available to women living in the Bronx relative to those living in the total New York City community demonstrates there are low levels of economic stability experienced across many Bronx residents. Figure 2 (below) highlights key differences in the levels of vulnerability and challenges experienced by women living in the Bronx. The differences demonstrate higher rates of poverty and teen pregnancy while income levels among women are \$7,884 lower on average among Bronx female residents. Further, In the Economic Security and Well-Being Index produced by the Foundation in March 2013, **five of the six Community Districts with the poorest overall economic security, education and health and safety outcomes for women and girls are located in the Bronx.**

countries, and 56% speak a language other than English at home.

- Bronx residents have lower educational achievement compared with New York State overall. In the Bronx, nearly one-third of Bronx residents in the labor force did not have a high school diploma in 2011 and only 17 percent had a college or advanced degree.
- The **median household income in the Bronx is just under \$35,000**, compared with almost \$57,000 in New York State.
- About 30% of Bronx residents had incomes below the federal poverty level in 2011, the highest county rate in the State and the highest of any urban county in the nation.
- In 2012, **the unemployment rate in the Bronx was 12.7%**, higher than any other county in New York State.
- Most businesses in the Bronx are small; in 2011, two-thirds employed fewer than 5 employees and 80 percent employed fewer than 10 employees. Still, the Bronx had 21 businesses that employed 1,000 or more people.

Figure 2. Key Differences of Women Living in the Bronx vs. New York City



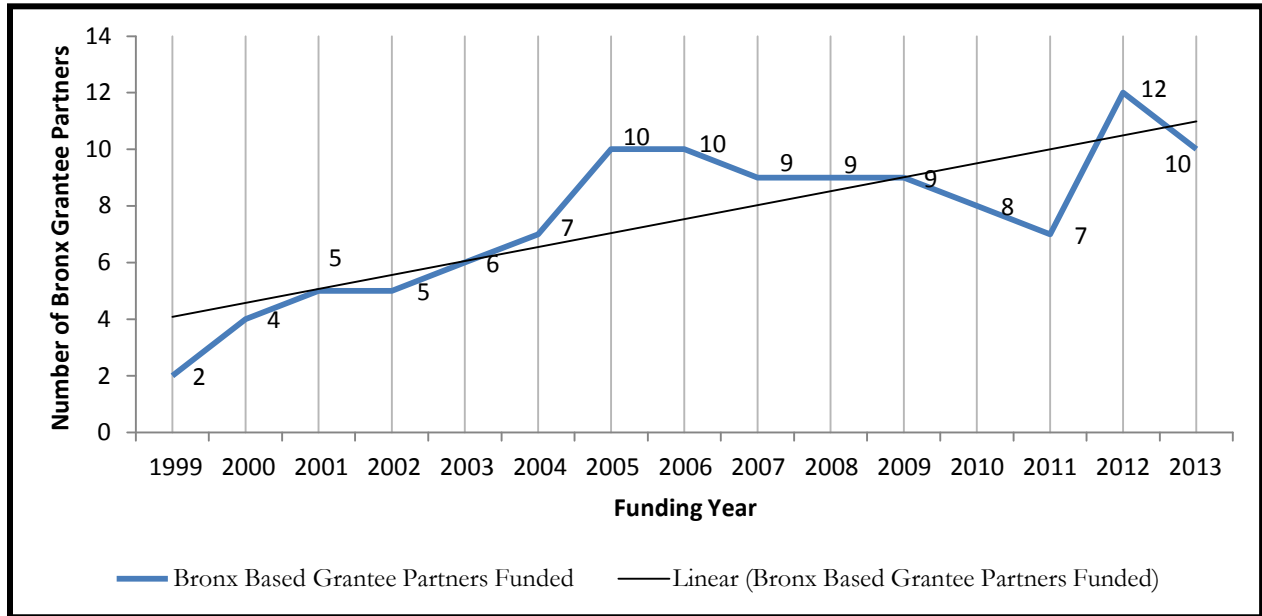
How is NYWF investing in the Bronx?

Issues of economic security, health, and safety from violence form the core of The Foundation's grantmaking. The statistics above tell the story of the significant economic challenges faced by women and their families in the Bronx. Many women face multiple obstacles to finding sustainable employment that will pay a living wage. Given the severity of economic conditions in many Bronx communities, The Foundation has made a strategic choice to prioritize grantmaking for organizations promoting development of small businesses, and/or offering employment training. Some grantee partners work exclusively with girls, increasing academic achievement and youth development activities to prepare young people to succeed in college and beyond.

NYWF has made significant investments in both Bronx-based organizations and Citywide organizations that can effectively support women and girls from the Bronx.

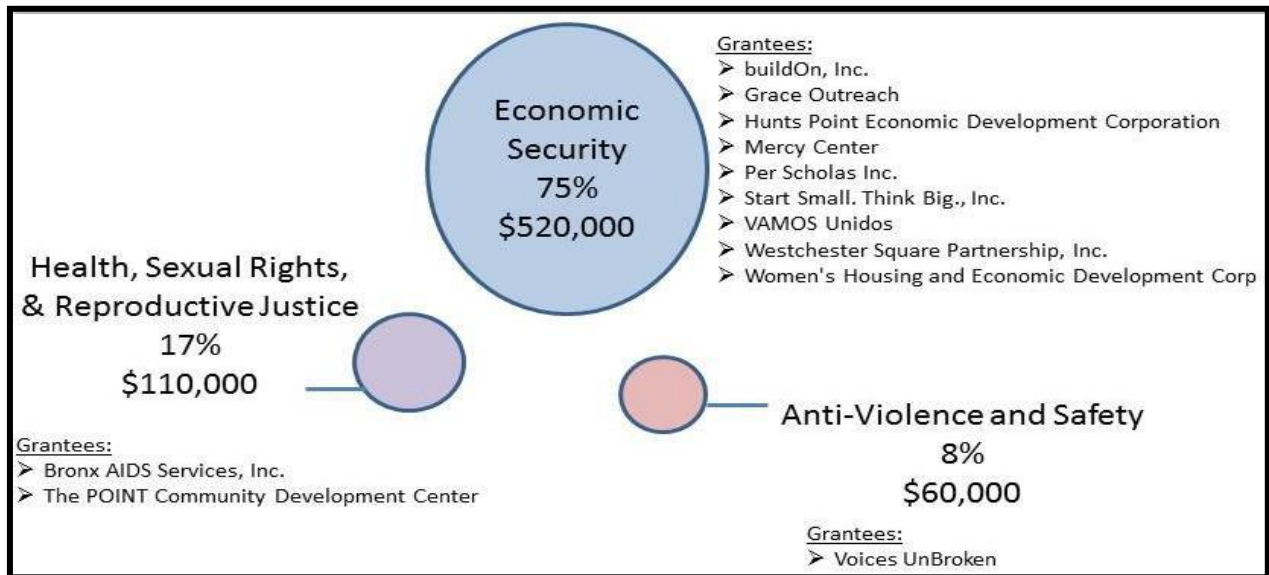
- A total of 25 Bronx-based grantees have been funded by the Foundation since 1999. Note that grantee partners funded multiple years are counted in each year they received NYWF funding.

Figure 3. Bronx-Based Grantee Partners by Total Years of NYWF Funding



- In 2012, 12 grantee partners were based in the Bronx. Figure 4 lists the funded 2012 grantee partners located in the Bronx.
- 29 of NYWF's core grantees served one or more clients living in the Bronx during 2012.¹ Among these grantee partners, 5 organizations focused on Anti-Violence and Safety, 19 focused on Economic Security, and 5 grantees addressed Health, Sexual Rights, and Reproductive Justice needs.

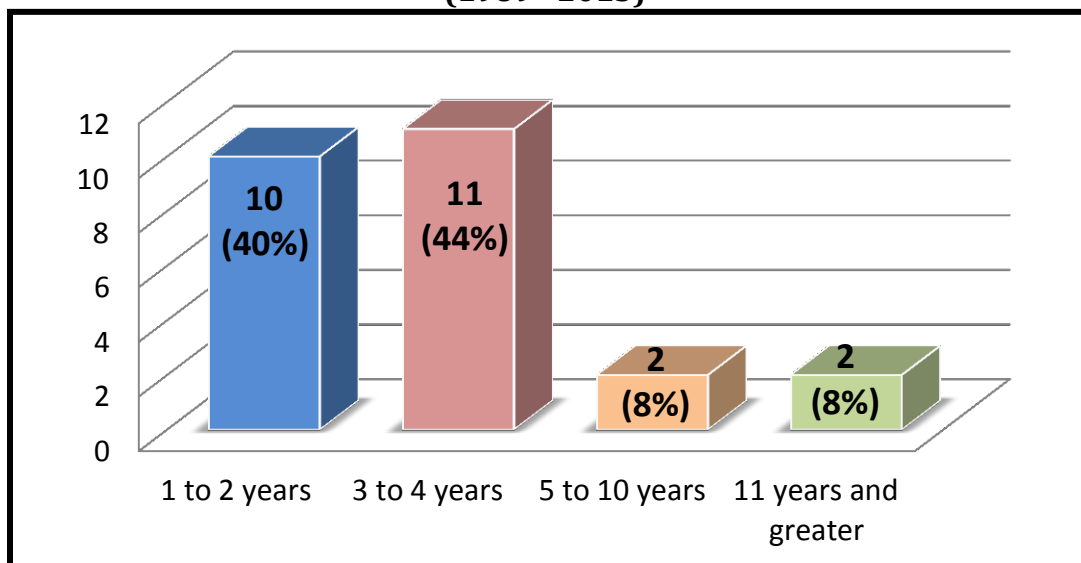
Figure 4. Primary Focus Areas of Bronx-Based Grantee Partners 2012



¹ These organizations may NOT be physically located in the Bronx but serve individuals living in the Bronx

- **NYWF invested \$690,000 or 14% of all core grant funds in Bronx-based grantee partner organizations in 2012.**
- NYWF also supports grantee partners through **organizational capacity building activities**. Three core strategies define this work: creating peer learning and information sharing opportunities among grantee partners, providing group trainings in such areas as fundraising and media communications, and offering customized services around strategic planning, board development and other elements of organizational growth and sustainability.
- The New York Women's Foundation invests in many grantee partners for five consecutive years. The Foundation identifies organizations that are true innovators in the early stage of development. These partners benefit from NYWF's sustained commitment to strengthening both their infrastructure and service delivery model. Some organizations receive additional grants over time as they develop new, promising approaches. Figure 4 demonstrates the length of investment The Foundation has provided to a total of 25 Bronx based organizations since 1989.

Figure 5. Bronx-Based Grantees by Total Years of NYWF Funding to Date (1989 - 2013)



- **In 2012, a total of 2,983 women and girls in the Bronx were served through NYWF funding.** This represents 20% of all individuals served in 2012. Grantee partners make intensive investments in the women and girls in their programs, offering integrated services to ensure that participants get the support they need to achieve their goals and move on successfully. **NYWF seeks out and funds organizations that offer life-transforming experiences to the women and girls served.**
- Of the total number of women and girls served in the Bronx, 2812 (94%) were supported through economic security intervention strategies, 76 (3%) were supported to address anti-violence and safety concerns, and 95 (3%) received assistance with health, sexual rights, and reproductive justice needs.

Progress to Date from Highlighted Bronx Based Grantee Partners

Effective community-based organizations support residents to build on strengths and overcome challenges. Here are some highlights of the work of Bronx-based NYWF grantee partners in 2012:

Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco)

has been addressing issues of poverty with a focus on women and families in the South Bronx since 1991. NYWF has funded WHEDco in past endeavors five times between 1999 and 2008, and has provided annual grants since 2009. Today, WHEDco reaches over 30,000 people each year through a wide range of housing, mental health, youth development and family support initiatives, as well as the Home-based Childcare (HBCC) Microenterprise Program. The HBCC program, to which NYWF targeted its funding, offers training, technical assistance, and networking opportunities to help low-income women own and operate successful businesses, increase their revenues and improve the quality of their childcare. The Licensed providers in their Microenterprise Network currently earn an average of \$37,500 gross annually.

Recent Successes.....

- In 2012, WHEDco **helped over 400 women to complete childcare “fundamentals” courses.** Seventy-six women completed the lengthy process of becoming a trained and licensed childcare provider and subsequently opened their own businesses.
- By 2012, **333 women had joined the WHEDco Network** (having completed the full training and licensure process to successfully launch their own business) and are now receiving professional development supports.

Participant Story.....

Ms. P started off as a legally exempt childcare provider caring for five grandchildren in an apartment that she shared with her daughter and grandchildren. Through WHEDco's training program, Ms. P was able to obtain her license in September 2012. Reaching this step was a huge achievement for Ms. P and prompted her daughter to move into a separate apartment to free up space in order to allow Ms. P to expand her childcare business. She has a love for children and a determined focus to succeed. Ms. P also enrolled in and completed the Intensive Business Development training after receiving her license. The course gives providers a roadmap for creating a successful business. She is currently in the process of ordering her business cards and making her flyers as part of an effort to outreach to families in the neighborhood in need of quality childcare. Additionally she has taken the step to incorporate her business.



Mercy Center, founded in 1990, is a comprehensive community resource center serving the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx, the nation's poorest Congressional district. The NYWF has partnered with Mercy Center extensively in the past (five grants between the years 2000 and 2005), and provided consecutive annual funding from 2011 to the present. NYWF funding supports the Employment Yes! computer training and job readiness program.

Recent Successes.....

- In 2012, among women who at been unemployed at intake and obtained a job after participating in services, **85% gained a full time job with 55% of these positions having a wage above \$13/hour.**

Participant Story.....

Annie is an African-American woman in her mid-50's. She came to Mercy Center feeling that she did not have the adequate skills or training to get a job. She was insecure about her age and had to rely on her daughter to use a computer. Annie first enrolled in Keyboarding. Before she started the class, the program coordinator asked everyone to bring a copy of their resume on their next visit to Mercy Center. A few days later, the coordinator found Annie's resume in her mailbox. It was hand-written. After successfully completing the Keyboarding class and then Introduction to Microsoft Word, Annie was able to compose a resume using the computer. Once Annie was able to build her skill level and confidence, she was ready for the job search. With the help of the program coordinator, Annie refined her resume and practiced her communication skills during mock job interviews. Today, Annie works as a supervisor at K-Mart, in a full-time position with benefits.



Naomi was in her mid-twenties when she entered the program. During her time at Mercy Center, she focused on the weaknesses that she identified: computer and interview skills. With dedication and hard work in the classroom, she mastered the technical skills and improved her performance in Outlook and Powerpoint. She also worked with staff to improve her interview skills, focusing on eye contact, clear and direct communication, and remembering to smile. Utilizing what she learned in class, Naomi found a job with Affinity Health Plan, an independent, not-for-profit managed care company offering free or low-cost health insurance to residents of the New York metropolitan area. She is proud to be earning \$32,000 annually with full benefits.

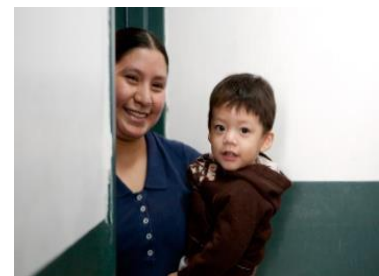
Start Small. Think Big., located within Sunshine Business Incubator, has a mission to provide participants with financial education and tools to increase their economic opportunities and build sustainable financial independence. Founded in 2010, Start Small. Think Big. received its first NYWF grant in 2012. The organization offers a range of client-driven, innovative financial literacy skill development programming and business development seminars to support participants in developing their own businesses.

"Our goal is to invest in New York City's most underserved entrepreneurs in order to nurture their talent and develop the next wave of leaders and innovators who will not only create jobs and value for our society, but also empower others to create a better future."

–Start Small. Think Big Semi-Annual Report

During the first six months of funding.....

- The organization facilitated eight small business legal workshops and 14 personal finance/consumer debt workshops.
- Start Small. Think Big provided, on average, 22 entrepreneurs/month with small business legal assistance and 7 clients/month with consumer debt assistance.
- As a result of businesses developed, 17 employee jobs were retained and 19 business owners retained their jobs, with 95% serving in a full time capacity.
- Developed partnerships with 20 organizations to provide a range of resources to participants, including pro bono legal assistance for entrepreneurs, debt reduction clinics, and case management.
- In a borough where 34% of residents have incomes below the poverty level, **60% of women in the program were able to start saving for the first time and increased their savings by \$285.** Additionally, four clients reduced their debt for the first time by \$8,156.



buildOn serves students in under-resourced high schools through one-on-one mentoring, volunteering opportunities at local nonprofits, and international development education, travel and community service. A major life-changing component of their efforts involves creating opportunities for student travel to developing countries to work hand-in-hand with local residents in building schools.

Recent Successes.....

- In 2012, buildOn hit one million hours served by United States students locally, and 500 schools had been built globally. Of these total values, the buildOn program in New York City had **provided 267,711 hours of service among 45 programs developed.**



Participant Story.....

"I view life differently since joining buildOn. I reach for higher things." – Maria

As the bus arrived into Kankumbwa village in northern Malawi, Maria pushed to keep the tears back. A flood of children with bright eyes and wide smiles bounced around the bus in anticipation as she and fourteen other high school students from the South Bronx, who had traveled to Malawi to help build a school with the village, stepped out into the hot, mid-day sun. For most students, it was the first time they had ever seen construction tools, much less used them. And while the work was extremely hard, they were far from alone. The local community members were right there beside them, brick by brick, in solidarity. For Maria, the strength of the women was what inspired her the most. Maria and her team were there to build a school. However, the trip would produce much more than a building. Seeds were sown. Friendships formed. Memories made. Each student would return to the Bronx with a newfound perspective on life and a better understanding of the value of education. Maria, a junior, is already looking toward her future. Her dream is to obtain a Master's degree in psychology. She hopes to travel more so that she can continue learning about different cultures and offer help wherever possible. Maria knows that nothing is beyond her reach.

The POINT Community Development Corporation (The POINT) was founded in 1994 and is dedicated to youth development and the cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx. Its work is aimed at the comprehensive revitalization of the Hunts Point community; and connects young people and residents to a broader community of activists and landscape of social movements to increase the power of the South Bronx constituency. The W.O.M.E.N. Project is designed to increase awareness of HIV/STIs and teen pregnancy among young African American/black and Latina/Hispanic women, building their capacity to educate their peers on related health issues. This project also provides academic and career development assistance to participants.



Recent Successes.....

- **100% of participants received extensive education on sexuality and healthy relationships**, were involved in community change efforts and received academic/career counseling.

Grace Outreach (GO) works primarily with low-income women who have aged out of the New York City school system without a high school diploma. GO provides programs for women seeking to enhance their academic skills, attend college and secure employment. Learning at GO takes place in a safe, non-judgmental environment that fosters hope and builds confidence, and GO's success with the GED program stems from a results-focused model that combines a rigorous education with a highly individualized curriculum that addresses the needs of each student.

Recent Successes.....

- In Bronx County, 32% of residents do not have a high school diploma. Grace Outreach is shifting this balance by supporting 94% (546) of women to enroll in GED programs and 34% (188) completed GED programs by the end of the 2012 period.
- In a borough where a stunning 90% or more of high school students are not ready for college-level work by the end of four years of high school, Grace Outreach has supported 125 women enroll in college.



What Makes this Work Difficult?

Grantee partners report a range of challenges, some of which are specific to their work and others that are basically universal. Not surprisingly, the economic downturn has presented significant concerns for many grantee partners. With high unemployment rates, job applicants face increased competition. **Grantee partners must ensure that already disadvantaged participants have increasingly strong skills as they conduct job searches and embark on new careers.** Grantees have strengthened their business development, believing that giving prospective entrepreneurs the skills they need to be successful is the best strategy to help many women out of poverty.

The poor economy also means that several organizations struggle with fundraising. Government funding and private dollars are in shorter supply and greater demand. In the words of one grantee partner, “The primary external challenge that we are currently facing is how to secure adequate and sufficiently diversified funding to sustain our programming and service goals for this year and beyond.” **Because NYWF is willing to invest in new organizations with creative ideas,** this funding is crucial to helping grantee partners establish track records that can be used to attract grants from more traditional public and private sources.

Additional challenges include staff and Board turnover, program development needs around refining services to attract and retain the most appropriate participants, and lack of stability among key partners. Sustained NYWF funding and capacity-building assistance allow grantee partners to strengthen organizational infrastructure and hone program models.

Conclusion

In communities throughout the Bronx, women and families are living in poverty, facing multiple obstacles to steady and sustainable employment that pays a living wage. **The difficulties may be evident, but so too are many of the solutions.** The community groups that NYWF supports connect participants with vital opportunities and help build stronger neighborhoods.

NYWF seeks to create transforming opportunities that help girls and women to live safe, healthy, productive lives. We are deeply proud of, and thankful for, the accomplishments of our grantee partners who serve Bronx neighborhoods. Their creative efforts assist women and girls to overcome challenges and realize their potential and, in turn, invest in their home communities. We look forward to continuing and strengthening our partnerships in the Bronx, progressing toward the goal of a more just, equitable and safe City for women and their families.